

Chapter 1

GETTING STARTED IN YOUR COMMUNITY

- **First Steps**
- **Recognition as an Official
AVP Program**
- **Checklist for Offering
A Community Workshop**

FIRST STEPS TO FORMING A LOCAL GROUP

When starting AVP in a new area, two considerations should be uppermost: first, team leadership and, second, program quality and continuity. The group processes that we model in workshops need to be reflected in the way we govern our organization. Our AVP leaders will show respect and caring that helps groups to recognize and deal with problems early and effectively. This attitude will be communicated to workshop participants, prison administrators, and community groups and is a touchstone for our interactions with each other. To ensure program quality and continuity, a solid base of local support and a core of trained facilitators are necessary components.

Questions to Ask...

*...the AVP/USA Committee of Local and Regional Groups (CLARG.)
Find local contact - e-mail: CLARG@avpusa.org*

- *Is there a local AVP community close by?*
- *Am I alone in my state?*
- *Where can I go to get trained?*
- *Are mentors available to come to our area to train us?*

... yourself:

- *Am I prepared to commit the next two to three years to getting a program started?*
- *Who else locally might be interested? Can I get enough locals involved to have some trainers come to us?*
- *What is my interest in doing this?*

1. Contact AVP/USA, Inc.

A group wishing to found an AVP program first needs to contact AVP/USA CLARG—Committee of Local and Regional Groups. (CLARG@avpusa.org, 888-278-7820) If you have not made arrangements to work with a mentoring group, the national office will put you in touch with an established AVP group that will give you support as you get started. This mentoring process will continue until the new group and their mentors both feel that the new group is ready to function on its own.

2. Collect Background Materials

Familiarize yourself and your group with materials that explain the program and its expectations. These include AVP/USA's Policy Statement and Bylaws, which can be found on the national website: <http://avpusa.org> and other AVP websites for additional materials.

3. Consider Seeking a Sponsoring Organization

Because of the need for a commitment to an ongoing program, the group needs a reliable source of support and funding. This stability can be provided by a sponsoring organization, such as a Quaker meeting, a church, or a local peace or nonviolence center. The group may further develop stability through forming a steering committee or board of directors.

Because AVP grew out of a cooperative effort among Quakers in the community and men at Green Haven Prison, much of the underlying philosophy and many of the practices of AVP are firmly grounded in the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers); a basic belief that there is good in every person, a commitment to nonviolence, the lack of hierarchy, the consensus decision-making process, etc. Because we believe these values are vital to AVP, we often have found contact with a local Friends Meeting to be mutually beneficial. You may search for Friends Meetings by town or postal code at <http://quakerfinder.org>.

4. Plan a Basic Workshop in the Community

The first concrete step in getting started in a community is to offer a Basic Workshop.

Why Give Workshops in the Community?

- To train potential facilitators.
- To train people at-risk so they don't go into prison.
- To reduce the level of violence in a community.
- To provide an opportunity for understanding between a prison and its local community.
- To build financial support for the program.

When

a group of interested individuals is ready, plan to hold a Basic Workshop with no fewer than 10 or more than 20 participants. Your mentoring group may provide leadership for the workshop. Each workshop must have a minimum of two facilitators, one of them an experienced facilitator. In workshops having close to 20 participants, it may be preferable to have a team of three or four AVP facilitators.

See the Checklist for Planning a Community Workshop later in this chapter.

A full workshop is 18-22 hours. A workshop of fewer than 18 hours is considered to be a mini-workshop and does not lead to a certificate.

Youth Workshop Help

There are many unique considerations when starting a youth AVP program. AVP/USA has a Youth Committee which can advise and support you in this regard. The contact information for the committee is available at: <http://avpusa.org>.

5. Consider Methods of Funding

Generally, your local group would be expected to pay out-of-pocket expenses, to provide hospitality, and to cover transportation costs for facilitators who come from another area to lead your workshops. In addition, a contribution to the mentoring organization is always appreciated, and may be negotiated with the group providing leadership. AVP/USA has available small seed grants to assist local groups in starting up. More information on grants at: <http://avpusa.org/orgkit.html>.

See Appendix – Fundraising, AVP/USA Seed Grants

AVP/USA Policy is that modest facilitator stipends may be paid for community workshops. This is at the discretion of the Area Council as funding is available.

Workshop donations: You will probably want to request a donation from participants (with scholarships offered in case of need) to cover the costs of your workshop (including food, site rental, workshop supplies and out-of-pocket costs of facilitators.) Rather than a fixed amount, set a range of donation amounts so people with varying incomes have a chance to give what they feel they can afford. Setting a top amount demonstrates the true financial value of the workshop, while the *sliding scale* permits everyone to participate.

Community workshops can be an ongoing source of funding for your new AVP group. As this Organizing Kit is being published, it seems that an average range for an AVP workshop in the USA is between \$25-100.

See samples of flyers in the Appendix and at <http://avpusa.org/orgkit.html>

If you have a sponsoring organization, it may be willing to provide some financial assistance (cash, in-kind or both). Some individuals and local businesses may be willing to help you as well. Examples of assistance which others have received include free use of workshop space, donated printing for announcements, and meals prepared and served. Be creative and don't be afraid to ask. Grants also are available to support the work of non-violence.

Co-Sponsoring an AVP Workshop

AVP works best in a community setting when there is a local church, community organization or parolee re-entry agency lending its support. It helps considerably for other people than the facilitating team to handle the increased logistics involved with community workshops. These preparations can be very distracting to the workshop facilitating team — just presenting the material takes energy and focus without handling registrations and money, buying food and bringing in chairs and tables, finding hospitality for participants traveling from a distance, etc.

For a successful workshop, ask co-sponsors to:

- Provide a working space
A room which will comfortably hold up to 20 participants and 4 facilitators seated in a large circle on armless chairs, with room outside the circle for 4 tables. We put up quite a few newsprint charts, so lots of wall space is certainly a plus.
- Promote to its membership and the community
AVP will provide co-sponsors with master copies of informative brochures, posters, press releases and other printed materials. The co-sponsor's commitment is to let its membership know about the workshop as well as how to enroll. We certainly would urge promoting the workshop to the surrounding community. Our past experience shows that diversity among participants frequently makes for a very satisfying workshop experience. Ideal enrollment is 12 to 20 participants.
- Provide food and beverages for coffee breaks and light meals
- Make financial contributions

6. Form a Core Group

All workshops are conducted under the authorization of an AVP Local Group.

Those who have been through the workshop series form the nucleus for the AVP Local Group. These people need to meet periodically to develop a governing structure, monitor the progress and financial status of the program, and plan next steps. Regular meetings also provide a place to share new exercises, variations on ones currently used and new Light and Livelies.

The responsibilities of Local Groups are listed in the Policy Statement, "Organization of a Local Group" in the Appendix, or go to <http://avpusa.org/orgkit.html> for the most up-to-date Policy Statement.

The Local Group also functions as the conscience of AVP, introducing the standards and ethics of the program, certifying and selecting new facilitators, and keeping the AVP principles in the forefront of running workshops.

As the group grows, a committee or task group structure helps provide a framework for sharing responsibilities and for further expansion. Possibilities include groups for coordinating workshops, maintaining standards and quality in workshops, keeping track of finances, long-range planning, and keeping records of workshops. In the meantime, individuals may need to take on several of these tasks until the group gets rolling.

See Chapter 4: Keeping your local group going.

Your Region will ask you to report annually the number, level and type of workshops (prison and/or community) and the number of facilitators. You also will be asked to report on your finances if your non-profit status is under the AVP/USA umbrella.

Insurance

Some schools, grants, and government agencies may require insurance for those who contract with them to provide services for students and other clients. Partnering with a local group may be the best means for assuring this requirement is reasonably priced and adequate. A rider on their insurance often can handle this request. AVP/USA is not offering this service.

7. Train Some Facilitators

In your early planning, you may wish to schedule a second Basic Workshop, an Advanced/Second Level Workshop and a Training for Facilitators (T4F). The timing of these workshops will depend upon the number of interested people, their commitment, the availability of facilitators from your mentoring group or other sources, and your group's ability to pay the costs involved.

8. Do Some Long-Range Planning

Where does your group want to be in one year? Three years? Five years? Will you have a community-based program only, or will you want to work in prisons as well? How many workshops per year do you feel are optimum for your area? What kind of organizational structure do you envision to support your program? How will you finance your plans?

9. Develop Lead Facilitators

A major hurdle for new groups is developing a sufficient number of lead facilitators. These are facilitators who have enough experience on AVP training teams to be able to support and guide the whole process for each level of workshop from beginning to end.

The certification process is the responsibility of the local group once that group has sufficient experience. Until that time, the mentoring group will assist you by providing lead facilitators and working with you to certify local lead facilitators.

See the AVP/USA Policy Statement at: <http://avpusa.org/orgkit.html>

In some regions the term Team Coordinator is being used instead of Lead in order to reflect more accurately the position and AVP's egalitarian approach toward working with a team.

RECOGNITION AS AN OFFICIAL AVP PROGRAM

In order to use the name AVP, local groups must agree to adhere to the bylaws and policy statement as adopted by AVP/USA, Inc.

(See <http://avpusa.org/orgkit.html>.)

These bylaws and policies are a model of AVP both in their content and in the process which was used to adopt them. Indeed, it literally took years to finalize the policies contained in those documents, but they now represent a consensus of regions and local groups throughout the USA. AVP/USA, Inc. is committed to the process of consensus and working through a collaborative structure to provide support for the work of regions and local groups.

Our desire is not to limit access to AVP principles, practices or concepts. Our copyright liberally permits widespread use of our manuals and exercises as long as not for commercial use and for the purpose of conflict resolution training.

See copyright statement on the rear of the cover page.

The purpose of the policy statement is to protect the quality of the program. AVP has a number of practices which we believe are integral to our success - bottom lines of who we are. Because AVP groups throughout the USA follow these standards, AVP remains the same program nationwide, even though no two workshops are ever exactly alike. Our policies also insure that actions by one AVP group do not jeopardize the tax-exempt status or the availability of foundation grants for all groups. For example, one AVP group engaging in political action or lobbying could endanger the tax-exempt status of all groups. Also, if one AVP group engaged in discriminatory practices or used the AVP program to proselytize for a particular religious viewpoint, the availability of foundation grants to all AVP groups could be jeopardized, and the reputation of AVP would be damaged.

CHECKLIST FOR OFFERING AN AVP WORKSHOP

Responsibility for organizing the logistical details works best if it doesn't fall to the lead facilitator, but sometimes it does because that person is most experienced and motivated. The workshop is smoother if a committee from the local group or co-sponsor handles all the logistical arrangements in advance and ensures that the workshop site is prepared. If you are hosting a workshop in a new area with lead facilitators coming from out of town, you will want to negotiate ahead of time which of these responsibilities will be handled by your local group.

See Appendix – Guidelines for Facilitating Community Workshops &
<http://avpusa.org/orgkit.html>

Organizing workshops requires specific tasks regarding site preparation, recruiting participants, and registration. These tasks are different for community and prison workshops. Divide up these tasks among those on your team.

1. Decide on times, dates, and related meal requirements. If you have a shortage of lead facilitators, you might want to find a lead before you set a date.

Timing

- *Beware of competition with other programs such as Non-Violent Communication workshops.*
- *Follow general school schedule: holiday times, no December, no three-day weekends, not graduation weeks.*
- *Offer Summer in-service credit for teachers and students*
- *Choose the schedule which best fits your group:*
 - *Friday night, Saturday, Sunday.*
 - *Friday-Saturday and the next Saturday (To get them back, do Yarn Ball as final closing and have each person cut a piece of yarn for to wear on their wrist until they return next week).*
 - *1 to 2 hrs a week/ twice a week for 10 weeks, using homework assignments. (works well with young people)*
 - *2-1/2 hrs a week for 30 weeks to complete all workshops.*
 - *Midweek workshops.*
- *Consider starting Sunday workshop day after noon to allow for churches to donate their space and for their congregants to attend.*

2. Create a budget for the workshop to be sure you have sufficient funds for all out-of-pocket expenses (include food, materials, site, facilitators' expenses, flyers, mailing).
3. Choose a qualified lead facilitator and then work with that person to select team members. The lead facilitator will set up times for team building prior to the workshop and create the agenda and reproduce copies for each team member.

Composing the Team

The team of an AVP workshop adds credibility to the workshop, especially if the team includes someone from the group to which you are offering the workshops, such as a youth when it is for teens.

Find out who is available and discuss the team with the lead facilitator. Diversity on the team strengthens the workshop — be this intergenerational, socio-economic, educational, personality (not all introvert or extrovert), gender, formerly incarcerated, gay, ethnicity and race.

Seek out a vibrant team of varied backgrounds, lifestyles and experience. All are aspects that you could include, but each one does not need to be represented.

If you find you are ending up with a small group of participants, a large team (a maximum of six) can augment this, giving new facilitators a chance to participate.

4. Decide who will be the Registrar.

What a Workshop Registrar Does...

The person who volunteers to be registrar needs to be someone other than the lead and should be someone organized, computer savvy and willing to take phone calls prior to the workshop.

- **Provides** a contact number and e-mail address to be included on the workshop flyer and on your website; regularly monitor these and promptly respond.
- **Answers** questions, awards scholarships, readily and generally helps people who call or e-mail. In addition to help with registration, some participants may need assistance with transportation, including bus fare.
- **Maintains** a complete list of names, and contact information for those who have registered by mail or e-mail or who made contact indicating an interest in taking the workshop.
- **E-mails** or mails confirmations to those who have registered, with information about the workshop.
- **Contacts** everyone who has signed-up by e-mail or phone to confirm their participation. Best done during the last week prior to the workshop.
- **Arrives** at the workshop 15-30 minutes early to welcome people, checks names on the list and accepts payments as appropriate.
- **Takes** lunch and dinner orders as needed.
- **Creates** a final list for the team and participants to take home.
- **Saves** the names of those who didn't come but were interested. Use for the local council's list of potential future workshop participants.

5. Design a flyer.
(*samples are in the Appendix and at <http://avpusa.org/orgkit.html>.)*
A range of donation/fee (giving people an option while putting value on the workshop) plus readily offering free attendance works best.
6. Find a room which will comfortably hold up to 20 participants and four facilitators seated in a large circle on armless chairs, with room outside the circle for four to six tables. Lots of wall space is certainly a plus for our newsprint records. (*Free rooms may often be found in churches, retirement communities, mobile home parks, colleges, etc.*)
7. Reserve the room for an hour or so before the workshop each day for the team building session prior to the workshop and for the debrief/evaluation afterwards.
8. Plan and arrange light meals and snacks. Some find it easiest to order sandwiches for lunch because there are always people who forget to bring their lunch and want to go out to get something, and you lose valuable workshop time. Make it easy on yourself and order food; don't plan to prepare the food unless you have a local group that wants to do this as their service to AVP. For dinner we often call in for pizza and whip up a salad to serve with it. Plan very few sweets in liquid or solid form as it affects the group's energy, although cookies or ice cream are a nice pick-me-up in the afternoon or after dinner.
See Appendix at Food for Community Workshops & <http://avpusa.org/orgkit.html>
9. Communicate with the lead facilitator to determine meal delivery times in relation to the workshop schedule.
10. Arrange for overnight hospitality in homes or motels near the workshop site for out-of-town facilitators and participants in a community workshop, and arrange daily transportation if they will be arriving by public transportation. Requesting a special rate with motels is generally easy when you explain what AVP does. Since some people are uncomfortable with staying in someone's home, motels need to be considered as an option.

Handling Hospitality Requests as Simply as Possible

The easiest way to handle hospitality needs and keep the cost under control is for someone in your group to arrange overnight hospitality at someone's home if this is acceptable to the guest. When arranging hospitality in homes, it is essential to talk to the guest to see if they have any specific needs such as allergies, accessibility issues or pet dog fears. Make sure the host can meet these needs. Give the host and guest information on each other, including their cell phone numbers. Suggest they make contact and leave it to them.

If the guest has difficulty staying in someone's home, arrange and pay for a room at a local motel that is within the budget of the workshop. If the guest wants to make these arrangements personally, be sure the budget for overnight accommodations is clearly communicated.

11. Provide for meals or out-of-pocket expenses for the team, including transportation and duplicating costs.

12. Be present at the start of the workshop to assure everything is okay. Leave a contact number and any other information for the team should a problem arise. Checking in with them is reassuring.
13. Assemble materials. In most areas the lead facilitator carries necessary materials in a kit, the contents of which are listed in the Basic Manual.
14. Prepare certificates for workshop graduates. Though some in the community will not feel this is necessary, you never know when someone in the workshop will find it valuable for their job or resume.

See Appendix an article on the Value of Certificates.

Also available at: <http://avpusa.org/orgkit.html>

Pointers that Keep Community Workshops Fun and Meaningful

1. Advise participants early on: "Put away your notebooks. This is your retreat. Even if you plan on facilitating, it is most important to experience what this first workshop is like as a participant. Don't try to psyche it out; just let go and have fun and learn about yourself. If you want the exercises, you can purchase a manual at the end of the workshop."
2. Refrain from telling participants how much better the prison workshops are, but do give them little vignettes about what it is like to facilitate in a prison.
3. Expect that your team may have a meltdown when the social workers or teachers in the group start telling you what you are doing wrong. Just keep the team focused on staying with the process because in an hour or two it will all be back on track.
4. Community participants love to stay in their heads. Refocus them on staying with their feelings and don't get into long discussions over things. Keep it moving.
5. Get them to deepen the experience soon after the first session with gatherings that hit home. For example: the first time I remember violence, how my family handled conflict, or the scariest time in my life.
6. Don't give up *Light and Livelies* because the discussion got going and you don't think you have time. Remember, it isn't a discussion group; it is a workshop. Frequent *Hurricanes* may help to keep the workshop from becoming too intellectual.
7. Be careful about playing to one or two people's needs. They rarely represent the group.
8. Love them for showing up; maybe some day they will facilitate with you. Even community people make changes...